



Broader Middle East and North Africa Region FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

"Across the Middle East, a consensus is emerging on the need for change.... Political, civil society, and business leaders have met to discuss modernization and reform, and have issued stirring calls for political, economic and social change."

— President George W. Bush

The Forum for the Future is a cooperative effort by the states of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) region, the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized nations, and other partners. These partners seek to promote and develop political, economic, and social reform in the region. Forum members are united around a common agenda that advances the universal values of human dignity, democracy, economic opportunity, and social justice. The Forum also serves as a venue for regional businesses and civil society groups to express their goals and ideas for reforms to their governments.

The first Forum for the Future will convene December 11, 2004 in Rabat, Morocco. Foreign and Finance Ministers will discuss how the G-8 and other partners can support regional ideas for political, economic, and educational reform. Presentations will be made by the Forum's parallel Civil Society and Business Dialogue groups, which are made up of private citizens from the region.

Initiatives

Participating BMENA, G-8, and other partners will review progress on their collaborative efforts, including the following initiatives:

- **Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD):** The DAD will bring together willing governments, civil society groups and other organizations to improve and expand programs and projects that support the region's own efforts on democratization and public participation. It will hold the first joint meeting of governments and civil society organizations in 2005.
- **Literacy:** A working group of experts will be formed to improve education and literacy, especially for girls and women, in accordance with the literacy goals established by the region. Jordan plans to host a ministerial meeting in 2005 to discuss broader education issues.

FORUM PARTICIPANTS

Morocco, the host of the conference, has invited the following participants:

- **BMENA Region:** Afghanistan, Algeria, Arab League, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Oman, Pakistan, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen
- **G-8:** Canada, European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, United States
- **Other Partners:** Netherlands, Turkey

- **International Finance:** The Forum partners recently contributed to the establishment of the International Finance Corporation's Private Enterprise Partnership for the Middle East and North Africa to support regional efforts to improve the business climate and to increase financing options for small and medium-sized enterprises. Forum participants are also considering

establishing a Network of Funds to maximize the effectiveness of development assistance to the region.

- **Entrepreneurship:** Morocco and Bahrain, working with Forum partners, will establish two entrepreneurship centers in 2005 to provide the region's young people with opportunities and skills they will need in tomorrow's marketplace.
- **Microfinance:** Working with the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), Forum partners have established a microfinance consultative group and are preparing to open a technical hub and microfinance training center in 2005. CGAP is also working with Yemen and other countries in the region on developing microfinance projects to assist the region's small entrepreneurs, especially women.
- **Investment:** The Investment Task Force, a private-sector, CEO-led group, will focus on increasing investment in the region to spur economic growth and create jobs. The Task Force, working together with the OECD, will assist in reviewing impediments to investment and make concrete recommendations for reform.

Forum Origins

The Forum for the Future was created in response to calls for political, economic and social reform emanating from the region in the past few years. These include declarations of the Arab League and the Arab Business Council, and statements issued in Alexandria and Sana'a.